Mindfulness for Medical Students
Mini-Elective
Spring 2018

Course Dates: January 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28, March 1
Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30 PM

Maximum Students: 15

Class Year: MS1

Course Director: Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed.
Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed. is a licensed psychologist who provides psychological services to the medical students at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. Previously a clinician at Western Psychiatric Clinic and Institute, he received training in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction from Jon Kabat-Zinn in 2005 and has taught mindfulness meditation in a variety of settings.

Contact Information: Lee K. Wolfson, M.Ed.
lkwolfson@medschool.pitt.edu

Registration: Betsy Nero, Office of Medical Education
betsy@medschool.pitt.edu

Description:
This mini-elective will give students immediate skills for stress reduction and set the foundation for life-long mindfulness and compassion. As described by Jon Kabat-Zinn, mindfulness is "paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Research has shown mindfulness meditation can lead to a reduction in CAD, hypertension, chronic pain, anxiety, headaches, depression, and provide improvements in overall quality of living. Among physicians, mindfulness programs have been shown to promote physician empathy, improve job performance, and help combat burnout and job-related stress. We are offering this introduction to mindfulness at the beginning of medical training in hopes of encouraging compassion for not only patients, but also the self.

This mini-elective consists of weekly 1.5 hour sessions for six weeks. Each session will include a formal 30-45 minute meditation practice, mindfulness exercises, and group discussion. A daily practice will be encouraged. Participants will develop personal skills and a knowledge base that can be shared with colleagues and patients who might benefit from this practice.

Objectives:
1. Participants will learn different types of mindfulness practices, and ways to incorporate mindfulness into everyday living.
2. Participants will become familiar with the literature and mechanisms supporting the effects of mindfulness practice.
3. Participants may experience decreased stress, leading to better problem management and healthier lives.
4. Participants may also experience increased compassion, better listening skills, better concentration, improved sleep, better ability to cope with pain, and improved relationships, just to name a few common ‘side effects’ of mindfulness.

Requirements:
1. Attend and participate in all sessions.
2. Complete a formal practice (5-30 minutes) five days/week, in addition to the weekly class session.
3. Complete at-home informal exercises. These are very short. Students will be asked to jot down a few observations each day or simply take a different approach to an everyday task.

Pre-Requisites:
An open mind and willingness to fully participate in the course.
COURSE OUTLINE

Mindfulness for Medical Students

Wednesdays, January 31, Feb 7, Feb 14, Feb 21, Feb 28, Mar 7
6:00-7:30 PM
Class location - TBD

Course Director(s): Lee Wolfson, M.Ed.
Participating Faculty: Lee Wolfson, M.Ed., Others TBD

Texts/Required Reading: Optional reading materials (articles, research papers) will be given out in class.

Session One
Introduction and Body Scan
This meditation practice helps bring awareness to body sensation. Time during this session will also be spent introducing the course.

Session Two:
Sitting Meditation
This type of meditation brings awareness to breath, body sensation, sounds, and thought.

Session Three:
Mindful Yoga
This light and accessible form of exercise will introduce participants to the practice of yoga and increase body awareness.

Session Four:
Qigong
This is an ancient mindfulness in motion practice for good health and healing.

Session Five:
Loving-Kindness ("Meta") Meditation
Loving-kindness is practiced to increase compassion and nonjudgmental acceptance of all people and beings, including oneself.

Session Six:
The course will end with an experiential review of the mindfulness exercises introduced in the class.

All sessions: All sessions will also include group reflection of progress through the course, including discussion of formal practice and informal at-home exercises.